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## International Development Banks **Working with the WB and the IDB**



# Table of Contents

## International Development Banks Working with the WB and the IDB

<b>1.</b>	<b>Why work for an International Development Bank? _____</b>	<b>03</b>
1.1	The WB and the IDB: two important institutions for Switzerland	03
1.2	WB and IDB staff worldwide	04
1.3	Employment conditions	04
1.4.	How to apply	06
1.5.	Career opportunities	06
1.6.	Possibilities for young professionals	07
<b>2.</b>	<b>International Development Banks and Swiss nationals _____</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1	Swiss representation at International Development Banks	10
2.2	«They did it, so can I!»	13
<b>3.</b>	<b>How can <i>cinfo</i> help you? _____</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1	<i>cinfo</i> 's services to qualified Swiss professionals	19
3.2	Some answers to the most frequently asked questions	20

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# 1. Why work for an International Development Bank?

The so called «Bretton Woods institutions» were created at the end of World War II in order to help rebuild war-torn Europe and Japan and to provide a mechanism for managing the global financial system. Today the emphasis of most of these institutions has shifted towards developing countries. Focus areas have in many cases been broadened towards new issues, such as education, health, corruption and development. These new developments have led to many interesting and challenging employment opportunities for qualified professionals with diverse backgrounds, aspirations and aptitudes!

This document aims at giving an overview of career opportunities at two International Development Banks that have specific interest for Swiss professionals: the World Bank (WB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The WB is a global multilateral institution, providing financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world. The IDB, one of four regional development banks, focuses its work on the Latin American countries. With Switzerland being a member state of both, its nationals can apply to all international positions these two institutions have on offer. For this reason it may be interesting to find out more about these two institutions and their career opportunities.

## 1.1 The WB and the IDB: two important Institutions for Switzerland

The WB was created at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944 together

### IDB Membership



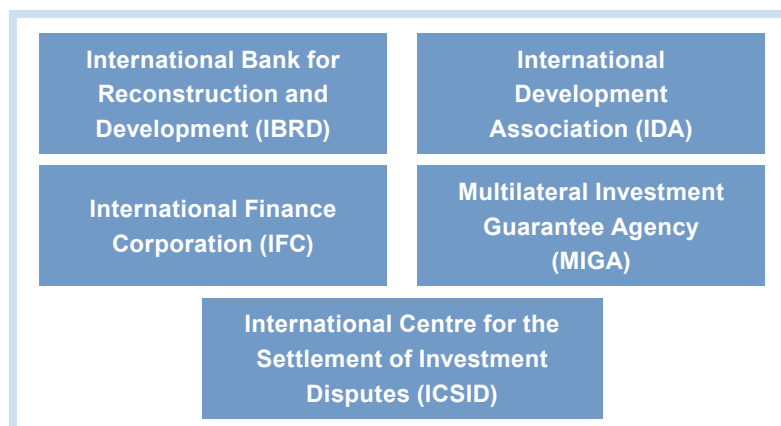
Graph 1 / Source: IDB

with a range of other financial institutions. Today, the so called «World Bank Group» consists of five branches: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the International Centre for the Settlement

of Investment Disputes (ICSID) (Graph 2). It is owned and managed by 185 countries, which act as borrowers, lenders or donors and which collectively set out policies and oversee operations (Graph 1).

Switzerland has been a (lending) member of the WB since 1992 and is represented through an Executive Director, together with Azerbai-

### The World Bank Group Structure



Graph 2 / Source: WB Human Resources

jan, Kyrgyz Republic, Poland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Serbia. For Switzerland, being a member of the WB means that it can use various channels to influence the priorities of this multilateral institution. Among other things, Switzerland works to ensure that the WB consistently focuses its activity on the fight against poverty and also promotes the private sector as a central pillar. Some of its goals are to make a contribution to solidarity between nations, to contribute to the alleviation of poverty and to strengthen its international standing. With its clear positions, its long experience in development-related subjects and with a close cooperation with the management of both organisations, Switzerland is considered a valued negotiation partner with the ability to have its concerns discussed.

The IDB was created in 1959 as a partnership between 19 Latin American countries and the United States. Over the years the membership has expanded to 47 countries, 26 of which come from Latin America and the Caribbean. Its main goal is the reduction of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development that is environmentally tolerable. It is today the most important multilateral financing source for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Switzerland, for whom development cooperation with Latin America has a long tradition, became a member in 1976. Among other things, Switzerland works to ensure that the IDB focuses its programmes consistently on the reduction of poverty and the Millennium Deve-

lopment Goals, and that it supports the modernisation of state structures in Latin America. Since the main voting power of the IDB lies with the receiving countries, Switzerland mainly makes use of informal channels, such as co-financing development projects or official state visits, to make its opinion heard. Additionally, Switzerland works on creating links to the Swiss private sector and Swiss academia, as well as on creating a close network with Swiss staff working within the WB and the IDB.

### 1.2 WB and IDB staff worldwide

The headquarters of the WB and the IDB are both located in Washington DC, but they each employ a large number of staff in regional offices. Swiss nationals can apply for so called «International positions» at Headquarters and at regional offices. Recruitment for «Local positions», in contrast, is only open to nationals from the country where the local position is vacant.

The IDB has regional offices in 28 countries in Latin America, Europe

and Japan, the largest ones being in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Haiti. Just over half the staff work at the Headquarters, while the other half works in those regional offices.

The WB has over 100 offices across the world, spread over six regions: East Asia, South Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Latin America region. Similarly to the IDB, the WB employs about 60% of its staff at its Headquarters, with the other 40% working in regional offices all over the world.

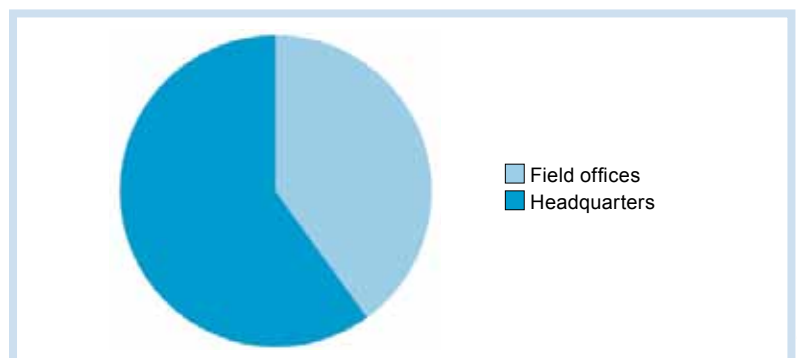
Currently both organisations focus on decentralisation, meaning that an increasing number of offices will in the future be located in the field.

### 1.3 Employment Conditions

#### Types of contracts

At the IDB there are two basic types of jobs: for staff and for consultants. Staff members are initially offered a fixed-term contract of up to 3 years that may be converted into an open-ended contract after a

### Repatriation of Duty Stations of IDB and WB Staff



screening-process by an inter-departmental committee. Consultants in contrast are hired for a well-defined deliverable up to a maximum of 190 working-days or 1,520 working-hours in a twelve-month period. Additionally the IDB employs some temporary help to meet increases in workload or to provide services for short periods, as well as Trust Fund appointments.

- Current amount of staff members
- IDB: 1881 (+ 2366 contractuels)
  - WB: approximately 10.000

The WB in principle has the same distinction between staff members and consultants. With regard to consultants, it additionally makes a distinction between long-term consultancies, which are made public together with other positions, and short-term consultancies, which are only given to contacts. With regard to their staff, the WB distinguishes between internationally recruited staff (IRS) and locally recruited staff (LRS). For IRS positions global mobility and international experience are essential. LRS positions, in contrast, are where these two characteristics are of less

importance. Finally the WB offers open-ended appointments of an indefinite duration, as well as term appointments for a specific duration of a minimum of one year and a maximum of five years per appointment

#### Short-term consultancies in the WB

Once you have made your first contacts within the WB, an excellent way to keep your foot in the door is to ask for short-term consultancies. These are not always publicly advertised or easily identified, although many can be found on the World Bank Group's website [eConsultant2](#).

#### Pay and benefits

The IDB's and the WB's remuneration policies seek to be competitive with the private sector, as well as similar institutions. Table 4 (below) gives an indicative overview of representative job titles in each of the WB staff categories, as well as the minimum and maximum salary for each of these positions. Please note that each category has minimal requirements in terms of relevant academic and work experience, which are usually in the po-

sition description. The indicated salary refers to the annual net salary and is complemented by other benefits that include contributions to pension plan, as well as other benefits such as annual leave, medical, life and disability insurance, accrued termination benefits and other non-salary benefits.

Additionally both the WB and the IDB offer a range of benefits to their staff. The WB for example offers an insurance programme, a comprehensive pension plan for all staff, resettlement relocation and expatriate benefits, as well as paid leave (26 days annually + 15 days of sick leave). Similarly the IDB has «regular» leaves (24 days annual leave, 8 days personal), as well as additional maternity/paternity leave. Additionally the IDB offers special working arrangements such as flexible or compressed work schedules. You can find more information about the specific arrangements on benefits directly at the [IDB careers website](#) or the [WB employment website](#).

**WB Net Salary Scale as per July 1, 2011 in USD**

Grade	Representative Job Title	Mimumum	Market Reference Point	Maximum
GB	Team Assistant, Information Technician	31'690	41'200	57'680
GC	Program Assistant, Information Assistant	39'140	50'900	71'260
GD	Senior Program Assistant, Information Specialist, Budget Assistant	45'470	59'100	82'750
GE	Analyst	60'900	79'150	110'800
GF	Professional	80'600	104'800	146'700
GG	Senior Professional	108'600	141'200	197'600
GH	Manager, Lead Professional	149'800	194'200	251'900
GI	Director, Senior Adviser	199'400	260'900	299'200
GJ	Vice President	261'640	193'030	328'120
GK	Managing Director, Executive Vice-President	287'370	325'890	358'420

Table 4 / Source: WB Human Resources

### 1.4 How to apply

Both the IDB and the WB have detailed career websites where the different types of employment opportunities are described and where all open positions are listed. The entire application is done through an online procedure, in which applicants must fill in detailed information about their education, their work experience and their referees.

The WB and the IDB both have career websites with useful information and tips for the application. This is also the place where open posts are listed. You can apply online directly:  
[www.worldbank.org/jobs](http://www.worldbank.org/jobs)  
[www.iadb.org/careers](http://www.iadb.org/careers)

At the WB online application system, once an application has been sent, the applicant gets an acknowledgement email. After that, the applicant will have to check whether he/she has been moved to the long-list within the online system. The candidate will only receive another email notification once he has been moved to the short list. A popular alternative way of getting a start in an organisation is as a consultant. These are positions with short-term mandates that do, however, sometimes lead to staff positions, or at least give a comparative advantage when applying for a full-time position. For example, the IDB has 1,880 staff members and more than 2,000 consultants. Consultancies are sometimes advertised on the website<sup>1</sup>. Frequently they are also only given to contacts.

<sup>1</sup> [www.worldbank.org/jobs](http://www.worldbank.org/jobs)  
 → Employment Opportunities

#### Social Media Presence

You can follow the WB and the IDB on Facebook and Twitter and even stay up to date on latest news by subscribing to their channels on Youtube. The IDB reaches out to its applicants through their LinkedIn company page, where you can network with employees and new hires  
 → [read more](#)

### 1.5 Career opportunities

Once you have set your foot into the organisation, an important question is how to then develop your career. Table 5 gives an overview of pathways for career development within the IDB, showing also the development potential for technical and managerial positions.

#### Profiles in need

Contrary to what some might think, the WB and the IDB do not only search for economists and finance specialists. Today the WB is the world's largest external funder of education, committed to fighting corruption, and to supporting debt relief to the most heavily indebted countries, or funds biodiversity projects. In order to respond to these new developments, staff of both the WB and the IDB are highly multidisciplinary. The types of fields asked for in open positions can be as broad as public policy, education management, social sciences, environmental sciences or public health. Typical profiles that might be asked for therefore include: renewable energy specialists, security specialists, water and sanitation specialists, but of course also management specialists or finance analysts. At the IDB, profiles cur-

rently needed are: social development specialists, natural resources specialists, infrastructure specialists, financial specialists and economists. Interesting new types of profiles additionally include fiscal and municipal management specialists, environmental specialists or social safeguards specialists. A fast growing division is the Opportunities for the Majority Initiative<sup>2</sup>, which offers positions for example for investment officers or research fellows. At the WB there will, over the upcoming years, be a strong focus on fragile states and on rural development. This means that professionals with background and experience in disaster management, reconstruction, governance, as well as food and nutrition, will be in specific demand. It also means that the ability and the motivation to work in the field will be a plus.

A change that has taken place within the employment policy of the WB is that increasingly applicants with a background in the private sector are encouraged to apply, while previously most employees had a background in the public sector.

#### Needed skills

Most of the posts for qualified professionals require a university degree, preferably with excellent academic records in the relevant issue area, as well as several years of professional work experience. The university degree level required is mostly at Master's (or Licenciatura) level. Another hard skill often required, is proficiency in

<sup>2</sup> Find information on the [Opportunities for the Majority](#)

## Career Management Framework at the IDB

Support		Technical		Managerial	
				Country Representative	R
		1	Principal Tech. Leader/Pr. Advisor	Division Chief	1
		2	Principal Specialist/Sr. Advisor	Unit Chief	2
		3	Lead Specialist/Advisor	Section/Area Chief	3
		4	Senior Specialist		
		5	Specialist		
		6	Senior Associate		
		7	Associate		
8	Sr. Administrative Coordinator	8	Senior Analyst		
9	Administrative Coordinator	9	Analyst		
10	Senior Assistant				
11	Assistant				
12	Administrative Support				

Table 5 / Source: IDB Human Resources

cinfo

one or more languages besides the mother tongue. For the WB, where English is the only official language, excellent writing skills and command of the English language is a must. In addition, language skills are often required in Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish. The IDB has four official languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese and French. Being eligible for any of their posts requires

at least fluency in two of their official languages, the combination of English and Spanish being considered the most useful one, others are considered an additional asset.

In addition to hard skills, applicants will often be asked to demonstrate a range of soft skills. These include for example a strong commitment to development, leadership capabilities, project management skills,

planning and organisational skills, the ability to work in a group and so on. Soft skills like these will often need to be demonstrated through work experience. One might for example need to demonstrate technical knowledge through work experience in the energy sector.

### 1.6 Possibilities for young professionals

The WB and the IDB both have a strong interest in promoting young talent. An excellent way for young people to enter the WB or the IDB is therefore through one of the many career programmes they offer. These career programmes have different requirements for eligibility, and hence also offer different working conditions. While some require the applicant to be enrolled in a study programme, others require several years of work experience. Some may lead to an indefinite contract; others require continuation of studies or even working for another institution for a certain amount of time, at the end of the programme. While some are advertised

throughout the year, others have strict deadlines and often long application procedures. All these are issues which need to be considered carefully before applying to a programme.

Tables 6 and 7 give an overview over the programmes that the WB and the IDB have on offer.

Many of the programmes are very competitive. The Young Professionals Programme (YPP) of the WB for instance, receives approximately 7'000–8'000 applications for 35–40 positions. A competitive advantage for this programme can however be to speak several languages, to have past experience in the field and to have work experi-

ence/knowledge of both the public and the private sectors. Additionally, it is important that the CV clearly shows leadership and team-working skills.

Throughout the time spent at the WB or the IDB, it is important to make the best out of the programme offered. This includes taking initiative, keeping notes about involvement in projects, or taking certain measures before departure. As positions with short fixed-term contracts, such as consultancies, are often given to contacts, networking is crucial during the programme. For more information about how to make the most out of you internship, see the document: [«How to make the best out of an internship»](#).



### Opportunities for young people at the IDB

Name of programme	Duration/period	Application period	Eligibility for application
Young Professional Programme	24-month contract	Jobs are advertised on the website on a continuous basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen of one of the IDB's member countries</li> <li>▪ Max. 32 years old</li> <li>▪ Fluency in English and Spanish, with a working knowledge of a third official Bank language (French or Portuguese)</li> <li>▪ Master's, Licenciatura or equivalent degree from an accredited university at the time of submitting your application (degree must have been already awarded)</li> <li>▪ Two years of professional experience in business related to the bank</li> <li>▪ Be exempt from any military obligation for the duration of the programme</li> </ul>
Research Fellows Programme	Designed to offer employment contracts up to a year in duration with the possibility of renewal up to a total of two years	Jobs are advertised on the website on a continuous basis	<p>Depends on post, but typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bachelor's degree from an accredited university or college, mainly in areas related to business administration, human resources administration or other related field</li> <li>▪ two years of relevant work experience</li> <li>▪ Proficiency in English and Spanish, both oral and written</li> </ul>
Internship Programme	Usually 2–3 months Summer internship: mid-June-August Winter internship: January & February	Summer internship: January-March Winter internship: October-November	Enrolled in a undergraduate or post-graduate programme

Table 6 / Source: IDB Human Resources



### Opportunities for young people at the WB

Name of programme	Duration/period	Application period	Eligibility for application
Young Professional Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 years starting in September each year</li> <li>Programme consist of 2 one-year rotational assignments</li> </ul>	Every year from May till June (notification of acceptance by last day of October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max. 32 years</li> <li>Master's degree and 3+ years of relevant professional experience or continued academic study at doctoral level</li> <li>Specialization in field relevant to WB</li> <li>Fluency in English and one other WB working language</li> </ul>
Bank Internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer season (June–September)</li> <li>Winter season (December–March)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>December 1 – January 31</li> <li>September 1 – October 31</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergraduate degree</li> <li>Current enrolment in a full-time graduate study-programme</li> <li>Fluency in English</li> </ul>
Junior Professional Associates	Two years	Recruitment is on-going throughout the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max. 28 years</li> <li>Min. Bachelor's degree</li> <li>Some relevant work experience</li> <li>Fluency in English</li> </ul>
Legal Associates Programme	One year with possibility of extending to a second year	4–30 November 2010 (for 2011 – may vary from year to year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate or Post-Graduate degree in law</li> <li>Nationality of a member country of the WB</li> <li>Fluency in English</li> <li>Prior work experience: minimum of one year and no more than two years</li> </ul>

Table 7 / Source: WB Human Resources

## 2. International Development Banks and Swiss nationals

### 2.1 Swiss representation at International Development Banks

Although Switzerland's membership of the IDB dates further back than that of the WB, the amount of Swiss nationals working for the WB

is much higher. This is partly due to the fact that the WB is a much bigger institution, but also due to the lack of visibility of the IDB in Switzerland. What do Swiss professionals bring as an added value to the-

se two institutions? The following part will show both the perspective of a representative of the state secretariat for economic affairs (SECO), as well as three Swiss working within the WB or the IDB.

Interview: Raymund Furrer, SECO

«Years spent in the banks will not be lost years»

**SECO has been aiming to increase Swiss representation within International Development Banks for a number of years. It promotes the Swiss network within the development banks through its Executive Directors and representatives in the field, and participated from 2006 to 2010 in the JPO Programme of the WB. In 2011, SECO mandated *cinfo* to provide recruitment-related information and outreach support to the WB and the IDB to make both institutions more known as employers to qualified professionals. Raymund Furrer, Head Multilateral Cooperation SECO, explains the importance of Swiss representation within International Development Banks.**

*cinfo: Why is Switzerland collaborating with the WB and the IDB?*

**Raymund Furrer:** Switzerland is a longstanding member of the multilateral development banks. It joined the IDB in 1976 and the WB in 1992 after a public vote. Considering today's global challenges and the increase in transboundary issues, multilateral development assistance has gained in importance and has become a vital dimension of Switzerland's



Raymund Furrer

development policy. In terms of size, financial and human resources, and in terms of the expertise available, the International Development Banks like all multilateral institutions have comparative advantages. The realisation of the Millennium Development Goals is a good example: To reach these goals, multiplier effects are needed, in this case, a big scaling up of development assistance. This is something that can only be reached through and with the assistance of multilateral institutions.

*Switzerland is trying to increase the number of Swiss working at International Development Banks. What is the reason behind this?*

We have an interest in the institutions reflecting the diversity of their membership. In fact, the international diversity of the staff is one of the assets of multilateral development banks.

The International Development Banks are known to be very interesting but also very competitive employers, and therefore manage to attract extremely skilled and highly educated staff from all over the world. We are confident that Swiss nationals have the skill and education to match the requirements of the development banks and can contribute to their mission. Those who make it into these institutions will become part of highly international teams and will be working with inspiring people.

*What do Swiss professionals bring as an added value to International Development Banks?*

Switzerland has good universities and higher educational institutions, educating professionals who can compete and who can make con-

structive contributions at an international level. «Typical» Swiss characteristics like readiness to work long hours, dedication, quality and timeliness are certainly no disadvantage when applying for employment in the development banks. Switzerland is also a multilingual country, giving Swiss professionals the advantage of being able to speak several languages. Of course every Swiss applicant has to prove himself on the basis of his own merits and competencies – the banks do not have quotas for their staff. I encourage Swiss nationals – be they engineers, economists, bankers or social scientists – to try their luck at the banks.

*What do you see as challenges for Swiss professionals?*

For newly employed Swiss nationals the fact of joining a large, rather complex and quite hierarchical institution can be a challenge. It can be quite demanding to understand how the institution works, to navigate within it and to understand the bigger context beyond the specific task given. Those having been at an institution for some time will moreover realise that making a career within the system is competitive, challenging and takes a certain time as well as stamina. Staff must be on top of their game, and show high performance on a continuous basis to be noticed within the institution.

*For Swiss nationals coming from the private sector, why would it be interesting to work with the WB and the IDB?*

Usually staff join early on in their careers after graduation or then later after some years of working experience. While in the first case, the banks can internally better «form» a new recruit, in the latter case they can incorporate specific professional skills that are in demand for fulfilling their mandate. This is certainly of high interest to the banks, but also an interesting career path for private sector professionals. The development banks work on cutting-edge issues in developing countries – at technical and often at policy level. They have increased the number and financial volume of their operations to develop the private sector in developing countries. Working at a development bank you can be working in very different contexts, from post-conflict countries to the BRICS<sup>1</sup>. An experience of this kind reflects well on the CV of any professional.

«An experience of this kind reflects well on the CV of any professional.»

<sup>1</sup> BRICS is an international political organisation of leading emerging economies. As of 2011, its five members are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

*Does working for an International Development Bank increase the chances of finding a job when coming back to Switzerland?*

Yes, I think so. A working experience within a development bank is certainly a distinctive one that can be capitalised afterwards – just think about the number of Swiss companies operating in emerging markets! At International Development Banks, professionals gain competencies at a policy, technical or operational level and collaborate with local, national and international stakeholders. This is of high value when returning, whether one works in an industrial firm, a consulting company or the public sector.

*Having said that, does the SECO particularly welcome professionals that have had an experience within International Development Banks?*

Experience in a multilateral institution is of interest and relevant to SECO. A candidate applying for a job vacancy in my field, who has taken the initiative to venture abroad into a new working and living environment, and has experienced working in a International Development Bank, is surely a candidate I would look at closely.

*Does Switzerland get anything in return from Swiss professionals working with International Development Banks?*

Swiss professionals working in the International Development Banks have bilateral contractual arrangements with the banks. Formally Switzerland therefore has no di-



PHOTOPRESS/SECO/Monika Flückiger

rect link to them or benefits from their presence in the banks. Switzerland however has a range of indirect benefits. Firstly, we are of course proud to see Swiss nationals working in these institutions and shaping them from within. Secondly, having Swiss nationals within the banks makes it somewhat easier to have informal contacts with the banks and with a network of Swiss nationals working there. Our Swiss representatives in the Boards of Directors cultivate contacts with the Swiss nationals at the IDB and the WB on a regular basis for an exchange of views and to network. When SECO pays a visit to the institutions, we are always keen on meeting the Swiss. This also allows us to make a sort of «double check» of the image we have of the institution.

*What is the advantage of working with cinfo on this issue?*

*cinfo*, with whom we have already had working relations for qui-

te some years, plays an important role, above all, as an information centre. Among the wider public<sup>2</sup>, there is still a lack of knowledge about development banks and the fact that they hire highly skilled professionals on a regular basis.

We are also particularly pleased that *cinfo* is offering a platform to the banks' human resources teams to come and inform about job opportunities to a wider public. This information dissemination is very important. What is also important is that *cinfo* is there on a continuous basis, so that people with an interest in knowing more about the banks have an access point where they can get information at any time. *cinfo* knows the contact points, as well as the application procedures and policies. So *cinfo* is an efficient way for somebody who is interested in getting to know something about employment opportunities within the banks.

*Would you like to add anything else?*

I am convinced that International Development Banks play an important role in managing today's global challenges. They are able to make innovative contributions and are pillars in addressing local, national and global issues. They are also excellent employers in terms of providing exposure to and involvement in cutting-edge issues within a professional environment. Interest in and awareness of employment opportunities with the International Development Banks is a priority for SECO. I encourage Swiss professionals to stay informed about the many employment opportunities at the banks and to try their luck. Years spent in the banks will never be lost years!

<sup>2</sup> *cinfo* organises an Information and Networking Mission on a regular basis. See [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

## 2.2 «They did it, so can I!»

Interviews with 3 Swiss professionals working at the WB or the IDB

Interview: Pia Schneider, WB

### «As a student I already knew I wanted to work for the WB»

**Pia Schneider joined the WB as an economist in 2004. Prior to that, she worked for insurance companies and hospital administration in Switzerland and Oregon and for Abt, an American consulting firm on USAID financed projects in Asia and Africa. She currently works at the Independent Evaluation Group IEG at the WB in Washington DC and is leading an evaluation on the WB's support to promote youth employment. She studied economics at the University of Basel and has a PhD from the University of London.**

*Info: What motivated you to work for the WB?*

**Pia Schneider:** I always wanted to work internationally and in a multi-lateral environment, where I could learn about different countries and cultures and work with governments around the world. I felt it was interesting to work in different sectors, which I think is important for my professional development as an economist.

Another factor is that I want to make a difference in countries and influence systems so that they become more efficient and equitable. The WB can make a difference, as it is often the biggest donor in a country and thus more influential than other aid agencies...

And I feel passionate about the mission of the WB, which is to reduce poverty. I also want to work in an environment that is intellectually stimulating, and this is the case at the WB.

*What do you think was essential in getting the position?*

One important point was my international experience. I joined the WB seven years ago as an econo-

mist working on health financing reforms in Europe, Russia and Tajikistan. I had quite some international experience having worked as an economist for insurance companies and hospital administration in Switzerland and Oregon, and for an American consultancy firm on USAID-financed projects in Asia and Africa.

What was also very helpful was that I have published some of the work that I did with USAID in internationally peer-reviewed journals and presented it at conferences around the world. This helped me to build a reputation as an economist.

When I applied, I was really dedicated and determined to get this job. I really prepared myself and my career to get to this point. As a student in Basel, I already knew that I wanted to work at the WB one day. I knew it was important to have international experience, so I worked one year for the ICRC and then I got these international experiences to build up my knowledge in order to eventually work at the WB.

*Were there issues that were different from what you would have expected?*

Not really. Before joining, I had the opportunity to meet with and talk to WB colleagues in the field, which allowed me to get a better understanding about the Bank. I knew it would be a lot of work and a lot of travelling, but I enjoy my work and don't mind the travel.

I probably did not expect there to be so many opportunities to learn. Every day is a learning experience! The WB actually has a mentoring programme with very experienced professionals. And there is a special programme for young women to be mentored by women higher up in the hierarchy. I was mentored by a Scandinavian woman, who is an internationally renowned economist. It was extremely helpful for me to have a woman as a role model.

*What tips would you give to Swiss professionals aspiring to work with the WB?*

When you apply to an organisation like the WB, you have to be awa-



Pia Schneider

re that you are competing in an international job market. So prepare yourself and try to be different from the average applicant so that you stand out and attract the attention of the selection team. Good English, additional languages and soft skills are very important, in addition to your professional skills. Many young people start as consultants and then eventually get hired as staff. It is also fine to send your CV and motivation letter to a manager and ask for a short-term consultancy.

For young economists, it is important to have strong quantitative skills from university. It is an advantage to have studied for a second degree, like a Masters in the US or the UK. Try also to work abroad for a year or two, for example as an ODI fellow<sup>3</sup>. You could also work for an NGO or an international or bilateral organisation. If you have some interest in research (as part of a PHD or a research work), it is a good idea to come to the Bank to present your findings during a Brown Bag Lunch (BBL). This gives you an opportunity to meet people working on similar issues. Young people should apply for the Junior Professional or the Young Professionals Programme. As for mid-career professionals, it is important to have experience either in the private or the public sector

and to have worked in Africa, Asia or the Latin American countries. Professionals often bring past experience from a private company, a government, an NGO or a bilateral or international organisation. For economists, for instance, it is helpful to have worked for the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Economics. For a professional specialist,

«You have to be aware that you are competing in an international job market.»

it is valuable to have worked for the respective Line Ministry. Professionals should try to apply directly for positions advertised on the internet or work as Consultants.

*Do you feel that you make a difference in the everyday lives of people?*

At the WB we use lending instruments such as budget support to governments. The disbursement of these loans to the government budget is conditional upon the government meeting agreed policy actions within a defined time period. Such a policy action could be for example maintaining the government allocation to social sectors in absolute and relative terms to protect social sector spending (i.e. health, edu-

cation, labour, social protection) during times of financial crisis. In this sense, we do have an impact on government spending. However, what we really want to know is whether this bank support in the longer run has had an impact on poor household's income, employment, health and education outcomes, etc. To examine this question, we have to conduct more detailed impact evaluations. An increasing number of WB projects now includes some impact evaluation based on which we can evaluate bank support in a more robust way, not just by reporting outputs and outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Fellowship Scheme sends young postgraduate economists to work in developing countries.

Interview: Laurent Corthay, WB Group

## «As Swiss, we are well-positioned to compete for WB jobs»

**Laurent Corthay currently works as a Regional Coordinator for Africa on business taxation at the Investment Climate Advisory Service of the WB Group in Nairobi, Kenya. Prior to joining the World Bank Group, he served as a Field Coordinator with the UNHCR and Medair. Laurent holds a master's degree in International Relations (major in international economics) from the Graduate Institute and University of Geneva, as well as a certificate in Tax Policy and Administration from Harvard Kennedy School. After a year of various consulting assignments with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the WB, he joined the staff of the WB Group in 2006 through the Swiss funded JPO programme.**

**info:** *Following your studies, you used to work with Medair, an international NGO headquartered in Switzerland, and then with UNHCR. What motivated your switch to the WB?*

**Laurent Corthay:** Both the institutions I first worked for focus on humanitarian assistance. This involves short-term, emergency type of interventions, often in difficult circumstances, to help people survive. It does not help them improve their quality of life, or their opportunities in the longer-term. Throughout my studies I had always been interested in international economics, and in understanding the dynamics of poverty and develop-



Laurent Corthay

ment. I wanted to work at the policy level, focusing on long lasting change that opens up opportunities and ways out of poverty. The WB offers this kind of environment.

*What was essential for your success in getting the job?*

Basically my first staff position started through the JPO Programme. Prior to this I worked in the institution for about a year as a consultant. I believe what was essential for me to get those consulting jobs, beyond my academic background, was, mainly two things:

1. Field experience. At the time, the IFC was looking for people that knew the African context and especially Angola or Mozambique, where I had been working for over a year.
2. Language skills. In addition, they were looking for someone who could speak Portuguese, which I did.

When I later applied for the JPO position, the fact that I had already worked with the IFC and the WB

made my candidature competitive. I had developed a network inside the institution and had worked, among other things, with the IFC's former Chief Economist. I believe his support was important.

*Are there issues about working at the WB that you would not have expected?*

There are a lot of things I would not have expected. Most are really positive. I am really enthusiastic about this institution. To name a few: Diversity of the working environment. When you take the elevator or walk the halls in any WB building in Washington, you hear such a variety of languages, many of which you do not know. There is an incredible diversity of people at the institution, which is very stimulating.

Access and opportunity. Working with the WB opens many doors. You get access to knowledge and resources that may be hard to get to otherwise. You can call on leading policymakers, businessmen and academics and they generally will respond. In my view, if you use these resources in the right way, it can help to achieve really big things. I did not realize the extent of this prior to joining.

A third issue, which is both positive and negative, is the travelling: I enjoyed and continue to enjoy discovering a lot of places I would probably otherwise never go to. But the amount of travelling can be so high that it starts to take a toll. I never thought I would start feeling like this one day.

One issue that I found difficult relates to employment. I am not convinced the WB is well equipped to continue attracting highly qualified staff in the future. Indeed, because we need to remain flexible as an employer and adapt to new context and circumstances, we currently have a policy of hiring most staff on term contracts. Open-ended hires have become a rarity. I find this surprising, because an institution that relies on knowledge, relies on people. And to attract and retain good people, one needs to provide them with a certain degree of employment security, especially when, as is our case, employment involves expatriation.

*Do you feel that your work has a concrete impact on the everyday lives of people?*

Yes, mostly. I think that in this sense, I am lucky on two fronts: First, I work in a very operational and hands on department. We spend most of our time working with governments and administrations on designing and implementing reforms to improve their business environment. Take taxation for instance. We help make it easier for companies to deal with taxes. This has direct impact on their daily operations, on their bottom line. It's very concrete and tangible. Beyond that I am lucky to be based in the field in a regional hub in Nairobi. I am close to the beneficiaries of our work. I actually live and work in the very environment I try to improve. So I can see the fruits of our labour.

*What tips would you give to other Swiss professionals that aspire to a position with the IDB or WB?*

I think the first thing I would say is: «They did it, so can I». Be persistent if working there is what you want. I know many of my university friends applied at some point to the WB. When it did not work, they gave up after one or two attempts. Today some regret and think I am lucky. It may be true, but I gave it time and put a lot of effort in getting where I am.

The WB is a huge institution. There is a wide variety of functions and departments. You do not need to be an Economist to work with the WB. The institution is interested in a wide range of backgrounds and profiles. So another tip, especially for young candidates, is to study the organisation and know what you want, like which department you are most interested in. When you contact people they want to feel that you know what they are doing

**«You do not need to be an Economist to work with the WB.»**

and why you think you would be a good asset for their work. Basically do your homework to see where you fit. You cannot just enquire about «working in development». That's way too broad.

Investing in building a network of people is essential. A lot of opportunities, such as consulting jobs, may not always be available or easily accessible from the outside. It's good to have some «champions» inside the institution.

Acquire experience first. I think that if you are interested in a long-term career in the WB, you are at your most attractive as a candidate once you have acquired at least 5 years of solid experience in an area of expertise sought after by the institution. That is a good time to apply, where you stand the best chance of being successful.

Consider getting started as a consultant. For the Swiss this may not be the most attractive option as we like employment stability and predictability, which our national job market offers. But consulting contracts provide an opportunity to be known inside the institution. Most people I know have started like this. My last tip: In addition to gaining experience in a technical field, gaining field experience in developing countries would be very valuable. The ability to function and operate in different languages is important, which is something many Swiss do have. I think as Swiss we are very well-positioned to compete for WB jobs.

Interview: Robert Pantzer, IDB

## «The IDB is looking for specialists»

**Robert Pantzer has been a staff member at the IDB since 2004. He currently works as Sector Specialist at the Institutional Capacity and Finance Department (ICF) in Bogotá, Colombia, and is responsible for the IDB portfolio and activities related to anti-corruption, public reform, modernization of the state and citizen security. Prior to joining the IDB, he worked, among others, for the State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO), the Inter-American Investment Corporation and UNDP. From 1999 to 2002, Robert Pantzer was the IDB Adviser to the Executive Director for Belgium, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland. He studied Macroeconomics and International Trade at the University of Fribourg.**

***cnfo:** You have worked in a range of different organisations and institutions, including SECO, the Inter-American Investment Corporation and UNDP. What motivated you to switch to the IDB?*

**Robert Pantzer:** I was originally mandated by SECO to spend three years at the board of the IDB. From the beginning I liked the multilateral approach of this regional development bank. Being connected to different cultures, especially the Latino culture was very interesting. So after having spent three years at the board I looked for an opportunity to stay with the IDB. According to policy rules, members of the board however have to stay out of the IDB

for at least one year before becoming staff members. With the support of SECO, I had two transitional positions, one with the Swiss embassy in Washington and one with the Swiss Mission to the UN, before I was free to apply for a position at the IDB.

*What was essential for your success in getting the job as Sector Specialist in the Institutional Capacity and Finance Department in Bogotá, Colombia?*

I believe it was a combination of different things. Firstly, I had strong support from the Swiss government. As Switzerland is under-represented in the IDB, the Swiss government really pushed for me to become a staff member during the discussions with the high administration. Secondly, the fact that I was at the IDB board from the beginning surely helped. Thirdly, I felt very connected to the Latin American culture, and speaking Spanish and Portuguese, certainly helped me to find my way through the institution.

All of this made it a little easier to re-enter the IDB once a position was open. That being said, I had to pass through interview panels like everyone else. Although it was not at all easy, I believe that this combination allowed me to finally become a member of the IDB and being posted in different country offices.



Robert Pantzer

*Are there issues about working at the IDB that you would not have expected?*

Working as a staff member is very different from working at the board of the IDB. When you are at the board, one can see just one side of the Bank activities and in the rather short period of time (three years) it is a challenge to understand the way in how this institution is functioning. When switching from the 11th floor (the floor of directors) to another floor, the situation becomes very different. You then really get to see the pros and cons of working for an institution like the IDB. On one hand it is very nice and charming to work for an institution, which is very Latino in the good sense. It can however also be very Latino in the bad sense, meaning that it is sometimes chaotic and badly organised. Everything is of course also very much focused on Latin America. If you have a Eu-

ropean passport, it is often not that easy to get your voice heard since the Bank, representing more than 50% of the Bank's capital is in the hands of the region.

*Which tips would you give to Swiss professionals that aspire to a position with the IDB?*

You have to be an expert in the field you are applying for. Whether you are a specialist on governance, on procurement, on health or on education, you need to have a sharp and specialised profile. Generalists are less and less required. Although I am a generalist too (and I am learning new things every day) the IDB mainly looks for good technicians. So you have to have a sharp profile and a sharp CV, focused on things you studied or have worked on. Furthermore you have to accept and embrace the Latin culture and working environment. Finally, it is of course a must to speak Spanish fluently.

*Do you feel that your work has a concrete impact on the everyday lives of people?*

I think it is very rewarding to work with a multilateral institution when coming from a different continent with a different culture. I believe that work experience from Switzerland and from SECO has an added value and brings something new and refreshing to the IDB and to our daily work in the countries.

«I do really sense that I mark a difference.»

Being posted in a field office probably allows you to feel the everyday impact of your work more directly than at headquarters. It allows you to engage in direct dialogue with the government and to follow up on the changes taking place.

Although there are tiring bureaucracy issues occur at times, there is much operational work on a daily level. I have a portfolio of loans, and technical co-operations dealing with politically very sensitive issues such as anti-corruption, citizen security, and in a broader sense, reform of the state (which means more efficiency but also cutting jobs). These issues are going through a very important but difficult moment in Colombia. Maybe aside of my know-how and experience, being Swiss and neutral in this position is certainly helpful. All that said, yes, I do really sense that I mark a difference.



## 3. How can *cinfo* help you?

### 3.1 *cinfo*'s services to qualified Swiss professionals

*cinfo* offers a range of services which can increase the chances of accomplished professionals to join an International Development Bank.

#### *cinfo* can...

- ... analyse with you your career opportunities during a **consultation with a job market expert**. If you wish to discuss and validate your career fitness for an International Development Bank, you could benefit from *cinfo*'s long-standing experience in career advice.
- ... propose you **workshops on careers** in the international development and cooperation markets. *cinfo* offers workshops that can help you in your job search with the WB including CV and job application writing.
- ... offer you a **skills assessment**. If you are already working in the field of International Cooperation and are considering changing your career in a meaningful way, a skills assessment workshop may help you to identify in which capacity you could propose your skills for a career with an International Development Bank.
- ... provide you with **information on the application system and interview training**. In case you have not previously had a competency-based interview (the type of interview used at the IDB and WB), *cinfo* offers you an individual recruitment support during the application and interview process.

- ... inform you on **selection and application processes**, including information about requirements and administrative steps. Upon personal request, *cinfo* can help you to understand these processes and procedures which may look difficult if you are not familiar with the WB or IDB recruitment system.
- ... invite you to an **Information and Networking Mission** in Switzerland. Once a year, *cinfo* organises a three-day event, where qualified professionals are invited to meet Human Resources Officers from a range of UN agencies and other international organisations such as the WB to discuss their competencies and interests. A networking event additionally enables the creation of informal contacts.
- ... support you during the application process. At the different stages of the application process *cinfo* can provide you with **technical, strategic and networking support** on the way to proceed successfully.

#### Some useful tips for qualified professionals

1. Undergo a careful assessment of your qualifications and the qualifications required for the specific position you are applying for. Make sure that these match.
2. Invest time to fill out the online application carefully. Do not assume that you can leave out information because it is on your CV.

3. Be explicit about soft skills and where you acquired them in the application and the interviewing process. Underline those skills, which are considered to be a plus.
4. The WB and the IDB are both aiming at decentralisation, meaning that more posts will be available in field offices than at headquarters. Especially for young people, the ability to work at duty stations can be an advantage in the application process.
5. Accept temporary assignments such as consultancy positions. These can help you to get a foot in the door and may eventually lead to a permanent position, or at least give you a competitive advantage when applying for a staff position.
6. Make use of social media networks such as LinkedIn. These have become extremely popular, not only for jobseekers, but also for recruiters (especially in the US). Even if you do not use them actively, do not forget to keep your profile complete and up to date.
7. If you do an internship or a partnership programme, network and make sure to stay in contact with your colleagues. Social media can, again, be a useful tool here.

### 3.2 Some answers to the most frequently asked questions

#### 1. How can I beat the online application system?

The WB and the IDB both have online application systems, where questions about education and work experience must be filled out and where a CV and a cover letter/ statement of interest must be uploaded. Specifically the statement of interest should not be underestimated. To stand out from the large number of applications, it must be short and precise (1–2 paragraphs) and show how the candidate's competences match the job description. The online application form should also be filled out carefully. Do not think that because the information is in the CV it does not need to be in the form. If the recruiters do not find certain information in the online application, they might not necessarily take the time to look for it in the CV.

#### 2. How do I follow up on the online application?

Once your application has been submitted, you receive an acknowledgement email. Both the WB and the IDB then allow you to log on to the system for you to see on which step of the recruitment process they are.

In the WB online application system, you can go to the Check Application Status page and click on the Check Your Application Status link under the New System heading.

The selection process follows this order:

1. Applied – Your application has been received by the system.
2. Long List – You have been selected for the Long List, the first selection decision has been made.
3. Short List – You have been selected for the Short List, you will be contacted for further information.
4. Interview – You will be contacted to schedule an Interview.

When checking your status, please note that the «My Status» column reflects the status of your individual application. Human Resources Personnel may begin evaluating applications before a vacancy is closed, so it is possible that My Status shows that you have been «Not Selected» before the closing date.

#### 3. How long does the entire recruitment process take?

This depends on the position, but you should in any case count several months. At the WB, the selection process may take from two weeks to a few months depending on the number of applications received for the vacancy and the availability of staff. At the IDB, it may take between three and nine months. So be sure to apply in advance!

#### 4. How many applicants are there for a regular staff position?

This depends on the position, on the location, and on the years of experience required for a position. The WB receives approximately 500 applications for a position where 7 years of work experience are required. A position requiring 12–15 years of working experience gets approximately 200 applications. At the IDB, between 45 and 300 applicants may apply for a single position. That said, it is important to highlight that not all applications even meet the minimum requirements. Once your application is in the long-list, there will already be far less competition, especially when the profiles are very specific.

#### 5. Is it possible to apply to several positions at the same time?

This is of course allowed and might not even be noticed in large organizational structures. That being said, it is important to be coherent and only to apply to those positions that match your qualifications. Recruiters will become suspicious if there is no coherence in applications coming from one and the same person. For example, you should not apply for a position as a senior energy specialist, and at the same time, apply for a support position.



*6. Do the WB and the IDB employ people with a background in the banking/corporate sector? Can I transfer the skills that I gained from the private sector?*

Both the IDB and the WB recruit people with a background in the private sector. Approximately 25–30% of the IDB staff worked in the private sector before coming to the IDB. At the WB, this figure amounts to almost 50% of the staff. This means that there are a range of skills you can transfer from the private sector to the WB and the IDB. An example of a department where experience from the private sector is specifically useful, is «Finance and Private Sector Development» at the WB. You can increase your chances by having a mixed background, with some experience from the private and some from the public sector.

*7. Is it difficult to (re-)turn to the private sector after having worked at the WB for a few years?*

One of the specialties of the WB is that skills can be built up and easily transferred to the private sector. In the WB there is a lot of flexibility between sectors, meaning that one might start as a specialist in transport and, through work experience, end up as an energy specialist. The skills acquired on the way can then be transferred to the private sector. Working at the WB also means a lot of geographic mobility; experience gathered this way is often valued in the private sector and can therefore easily be transferred. While at the IDB a bigger percentage of the staff stays in the public sector after having worked at the IDB, skills are of course also transferable here in a similar way.

*8. I am still studying and would like to direct my studies in a way that matches the upcoming needs of international financial institutions. Which areas should I focus on?*

The WB and the IDB are both constantly adapting to new issue areas and need employees who are familiar with these. For example, an upcoming focus of the WB will be on fragile states. This means that specialists in areas such as reconstruction, disaster management, food and nutrition, as well as governance will be needed. Other current and upcoming issues include education, land reform, renewable energy, and water resources. For the IDB, fast growing departments are Fiscal and Municipal Management, Environmental and Social Safeguards and Opportunities for the Majority<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Find information on the [Opportunities for the Majority](#)



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